

CITY REPORT

Naples

The solidarity city reinventing urban commons.

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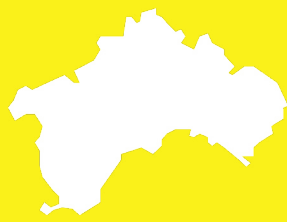


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1. Abstract & Takeaways

Key Takeaways:

1

Mayor De Magistris's firm and vocal political positioning significantly reinforced networking among solidarity cities at national and international levels.

2

The city launched an innovative urban commons charter (unique in Italy) for the creation of self-managed collective spaces, where city assets are considered as commons to be used for social purposes.

3

The "I Tavoli," which are multi-stakeholder decision making roundtables tackling a specific policy issue. These have proven to be a successful way of facilitating dialogue between citizens and the administration.

What is unique about the city?

Local activism meets an active mayor: Naples is an important crossroad in the Mediterranean and a solidarity city thanks to local activism, which includes a remarkable presence of migrant-led associations, as well as the political engagement of Mayor De Magistris.

What is the focus of local migration policies?

A city of human rights: Practical and symbolic acts of the De Magistris administration frame Naples as a city of peace and rights in local, national, and international arenas. Naples reinforced this position in 2018, following the national government's restrictive and punitive position towards sea rescue during Matteo Salvini's (from the right-wing Northern League) time in office as Interior Minister.

What are the most outstanding results so far?

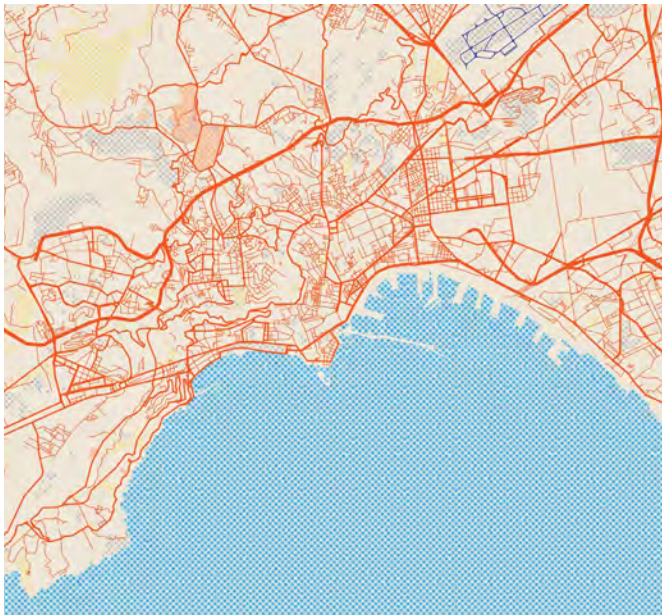
Opposing Salvini, saving lives: The most outstanding results involve publicly sustaining the message of a city of solidarity. In June 2018, De Magistris declared: "Naples is ready, without funding, to save lives. [...] If a heartless Ministry leaves pregnant women, children, the elderly, human beings to die at sea, the port of Naples is ready to welcome them."

What are the key factors?

A high degree of self-organisation: Coalitions of volunteers, NGOs, social movements, trade unions, associations, and social service providers take care of most practical needs and tasks in welcoming refugees. These organisations are often working informally and are self-organised. The city government has positioned itself as a mediator and facilitator between local actors and alliances.

Political activities and advocacy beyond the city level?

Together with other Italian cities, Naples challenged the hostile migration policies of the national government during Salvini's time as Interior Minister. As recognition for its humanitarian efforts, Naples was included in the Network of Solidarity Municipalities (or Rete dei Comuni Solidali Re.Co.Sol) in January 2019.



Population

967,069¹

Location/ region

Naples is the capital of the Campania region and the main urban centre of the Naples Metropolitan City, a provincial government authority.

Mayor (party)

Luigi De Magistris
(Democracy and Autonomy)

“We thank all the citizens who immediately took action—within a few hours, the whole city has positively overcome this social and humanitarian emergency, in a perfect union between institutions and citizens, because together we have supported the hospitality process, openness, inclusion, and integration.”

(Deputy mayor for Welfare R. Gaeta in 2016, after the rescued Gregoretti boat carrying 466 migrants, including 98 unaccompanied minors, disembarked in Naples)

2. Local background and context

Naples is the largest port city in Italy, an important crossroad in the Mediterranean, and has opened its land to many migrant populations over the centuries. Today, local activism and the pro-migrant engagement of mayor De Magistris brought Naples to the attention of national and European debates for its solidarity towards refugees.

New hope with the De Magistris mandate

When De Magistris came to power in 2011, the city suffered from endemic problems: a complexity of socio-economic issues visible in the malfunctioning of public services, including the lack of adequate and affordable housing. Naples has been recording the largest statistical urban poverty rate among large Italian cities and counted high levels of unemployment coexisting with black markets, petty crime and prosperous illegal trades.² De Magistris' election, however, offered new political hope. Supported by local social movements, his administration promised a radical change with a serious fight against black markets, tax evasion, and abuses concerning the occupation of public land. Furthermore, from the outset, this administration had to face a critical financial situation inherited from past local administrations. This was considerably aggravated by further cuts in national transfers during the Monti national government (2011-2013).

This clear political tension over the financial budget between national and local levels has pressured the De Magistris administration, including on migration policy. As of 2021, the public administration has accumulated further debt amounting to 4.1 billion Euros.³

Facilitating self-organisation from below

These adverse economic circumstances, which considerably restrained public investment, led many actors to incentivise community building, self-entrepreneurship and mutual aid, funded by civic society to respond to the needs of the migrant population. "This was possible because of a healthy third sector, activism and social movements gained substantial experience and autonomy over the past years," said Laura Marmorale, former deputy mayor on social policies in Naples.

The collaboration between public administration and organised civil society has been reinforced under the De Magistris Mayoral mandate, in experimenting with innovative approaches in the area of social rights, in building new governance structures, and in creating unprecedented alliances with organised civil society.

"Without deepening its deficit or defunding other essential services, the administration succeeded in moving forward on some radical democratic principles in the area of social rights," continues Laura Marmorale. One example is the Charter promulgated in 2013,⁴ a document that grants migrants, regardless of their status, the same rights as other citizens for

² https://corrieredelmezzogiorno.corriere.it/napoli/economia/19_ottobre_14/campagna-rischio-poverta-nessuno-sta-peggio-europa-b88c0358-ee49-11e9-a917-bfde0b36c5e3.shtml

³ https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2021/05/28/news/scheda_bilancio_comune_napoli_debito-303168693/

⁴ <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/20645>

services provided by the Municipality. De Magistris's political mandate will also be remembered for experimenting with sustainable urban commons governance mechanisms—a first in Italy. With the system called “Civic uses,” Naples has experimented with reusing public building for culturally inclusive activities through civic “direct management.”⁵ A pilot regulation for the bottom-up management of the “ex Asilo Filangieri” was extended to other building complexes recognised as ‘common goods’ in Naples, all occupied in recent years by different citizens’ movements reclaiming space for self-managed socio-cultural activities. By now, there are 8 spaces dedicated to self-management run by local communities, some in support of migrants.

3. Selected local approaches

The majority of the migrant population in Naples is covered by public health care and welfare. However, due to systemic issues and a lack of resources, services do not reach out to all people in need. The third sector has covered some of the extant gaps, advocating at the same time for new impetus to improve public service offerings. The selected innovative approaches suggested by interviewees include the public/private partnership cooperation for the project “Yalla! Social community services,” the commons charter with a focus on those self-managed spaces hosting community-led services to the migrant population, and the coordination of the “I Tavoli” roundtables between the municipal authority and civic initiatives.

3.1 Mapping Grassroots, NGO and civic initiatives in Naples

Naples can count on a wide range of organizations offering services for migrants and refugees. A 2021 study mapped all these initiatives in the Naples metropolitan areas. They are available online in an application titled M-APP.⁶ The mapped services cover the city centre and address anti-discrimination, anti-trafficking, legal assistance, education, housing, and health support. For each location, the app briefly describes the type of activities covered and the corresponding contacts. It is an important resource for finding aid and for showing the vitality of grassroots organisation in this area.

Listed actors include trade unions, commoners, religious organisations, cooperatives (e.g. DEDALUS⁷, CASBA social coop et al) and ONG (e.g. L.E.S.S. onlus⁸ et al). Some of these initiatives are migrant-led associations such as the SENASO association. SENASO is run by the Senegalese community, one of the oldest migrant communities in the city. It has opened a co-working space (<https://www.senaso.it/> - coordinator Pierre Preira), which has expanded to become a legal consultancy spot and a meeting place for the Nigerian, Ivorian, Belarusian, Chinese, and Pakistani communities. During COVID—19 lockdown it became the logistical centre for food and goods to be distributed to families in need.

⁵ <https://urbact.eu/urban-commons-civic-estate>

⁶ <http://www.unescochair-iuav.it/capacitymetro-italia/>

⁷ The DEDALUS cooperative, active since the 80's in Naples, offers a wide and multidisciplinary expertise, and develops projects for the integration, training, and support to migrants, refugees and in general people at risk of socio-economic exclusion, autonomously or on behalf of public bodies. Some projects include financial education of migrants; B.ES.T: empowerment of migrants as intercultural mediators; CIAK: journalism training for migrants, with a focus on identity. <http://www.coopededalus.it>

⁸ Active since 1999, it is focused on services to migrants and refugees. It has been often involved in municipal programs, as the IARA project (http://www.lessimpre-sasociale.it/en_progetti_8_project_ilara.html).

3.2 The Charter of Urban Commons

The city launched an innovative urban commons charter (unique for its status in Italy) to create self-managed collective spaces. As a result, city assets are considered as commons to be used for social purposes.

Transforming vacant spaces into urban commons

Social centres and activism have an important role in the self-managed social centre OPG-JE SO PAZZO.⁹ The OPG is an ex-psychiatric hospital managed by a local community of activists. OPG was included in the beni comuni- urban commons framework of the city (see above) i.e. a network of informal communities which manage underused buildings owned by the municipality, following an agreement signed under the Charter of urban commons with the City of Naples. The urban commons are defined through a process of collaboration between the municipality and civil society. “When a vacant building is or starts being used informally by the local community for social, political or cultural purposes and is recognized by the local Naples’s government as a “common good,” a regulation for its “civic use” is elaborated by the local community itself through a participatory process, and then adopted by local government. The regulation defines the rights, duties, and responsibilities for using the particular vacant building as a common good. The regulation defines the self-management structures, involvement process, guarantees of public access and collective use, principles of cooperation and co-management, financial resources for site management, and the integration of sustainability principles in site management. Based on this regulation, the initiative is officially allowed to use the building complex.”¹⁰

A new wave of initiatives for migrants

Among the activities taking place on premises falling under the commons scheme, are several services and initiatives directed to migrants. Most importantly, as in the case of the OPG, the social centre acts as a point of political organising and representation of migrants and refugees,¹¹ and for legal and financial advice.¹² Another noteworthy activity is the “Controllo Popolare CAS,”¹³ which stands for “popular control of centres of emergency hospitality.” Through this initiative, CAS are monitored by community members, to verify the conditions in which migrants and refugees are hosted.

3.3 Coordinating public sector services with NGOs: the Yalla Social Community Services!

“YALLA! Social Community Services”¹⁴ is a positive example of cooperation among the public administration, local NGOs, University, and other stakeholders. Co-funded with EU AMIF during the 15/05/2020 - 31/12/2021 implementation period, the project’s overall goal is “to improve the level of efficiency of the Naples social welfare services system, especially in responding to the needs of citizens of Third Countries, with particular attention to families with minors in housing difficulties.”¹⁵

⁹ <http://jesopazzo.org>

¹⁰ <http://remakingthecity.urbact.eu/regulation-of-civic-use-of-urban-commons-common-goods-naples-italy--47.case>

¹¹ <http://www.jesopazzo.org/index.php/iniziativa/660-workshop-controllo-popolare-centri-accoglienza>

¹² <http://www.jesopazzo.org/index.php/attivita/migranti/sportello-immigrati>

¹³ <http://www.jesopazzo.org/index.php/attivita/migranti/controllo-popolare-cas>

¹⁴ <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/41646>

¹⁵ <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/412>

The official service provisions addressing the migrant population are determined by the national, regional and local government schemes. The Municipality of Naples has a department titled “welfare and equal opportunities” with a section dedicated to migrants, refugees, and Roma people. It helps them access services to claim their rights.¹⁶ The challenge to which “YALLA! Social Community Services” responds concerns how to open up institutional structures for collaboration with civil society.

In more detail, the project aims at:

- Improving the organisation of Area Social Plan services with new operational tools and support procedures (e.g. participatory project management);
- Creating a local network of public and private entities able to provide social assistance services to Third Country Nationals
- Promoting and strengthening the intercultural skills of service operators;
- Piloting new models of social inclusion to fight early school leaving and housing problems;
- Raising awareness among local community members about integration and human rights.¹⁷

Future actions may include :

- Analysis and reorganisation of services in different zones of the city with impact on the migrant population: mapping of needs / offer analysis, service design and participatory planning, procedure support;
- Capacity Building: Refresher courses for public operators, multi-area thematic seminars;¹⁸

Enhancing access to services: development of multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance networks to facilitate service access, system mediation services, cultural mediation. The *Mygrants One Stop Shop*,¹⁹ opened in 2020 and managed by the cooperative LESS, gives professional support for free to foreign citizens, especially to those who couldn't access other service suppliers in the metropolitan area. It also offers legal consulting, takes care of handling administrative procedures on behalf of migrants and refugees, and provides information and coaching about employment and educational programs. The Migrants project has opened in collaboration with the Associazione Inclusion Alternativa. Together with the “Nacupenda” tailor's shop, they will integrate the “Social Wardrobe” project to distribute clothing to disadvantaged populations. With the introduction of Nacupenda, it will be possible to make tailoring adjustments and small repairs to give each garment a new shape. Experimentation on pilot actions: accompanying local services for school inclusion, “Work & Stay” homestay, design and implementation of a digital multi-stakeholder platform for matching supply and demand.

¹⁶ <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/412>
<https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/5559>

¹⁷ <https://morethanprojects.actionaid.it/en/projects/social-services-migrants-integration/>

¹⁸ outputs available <https://morethanprojects.actionaid.it/en/projects/social-services-migrants-integration/>

¹⁰ Professional capacity-building interventions

- 30 Rounds of workshops
- 3 Network Agreements
- 6 Service improvement co-design processes
- 1 Publication containing recommendations for model replicability
- 1 Guidelines for school inclusion
- 3 Pilot interventions to improve school inclusion, mediation, and housing integration services
- 1 Digital platform
- 1 Local final meeting

¹⁹ The definition one stop shop is used in the policy literature is to define services that respond to the specific demands of users, rather than offering pre-designed services.

Challenging housing exclusion

The Yalla! Project has begun work on a pilot project in social co-housing. This initiative is particularly relevant because it tries to respond to a more complex challenge affecting a wide group of people experiencing housing exclusion in the city. The existing housing provision is not sufficient to cover demand and the private market is hardly accessible for newcomers. Migrant population access to housing is officially provided in the frame of the national SPRAR system. The SPRAR (renamed Siproimi in 2019) is a result of an agreement between national and local administrations, delivering locally integrated services for refugees and people holding humanitarian protection (see the Italy Country Profile for details regarding these programs). The Siproimi is developed by the Naples municipality and coordinated by NGOs, which ensure that people concerned have access to adequate housing in “Welcome Centres”, with legal and social assistance during all the procedures required to obtain refugee status. After the status is recognised, Siproimi is meant to offer a personalised integration in the local social and economic context. The program offers a total of 132 accommodations in five different locations in the city.

According to interviews,²⁰ housing conditions are problematic; the Sprar/Siproimi/SAI is not sufficient. Interviewees declare that even though the Sprar/Siproimi/SAI is present in different parts of the city, many SAI accommodations are concentrated in and around already socially disadvantaged areas. Critics claim that confining migrants to a few urban areas inhibits social mixing and has increased social tensions in these areas. Media reports indicate that while some welcome centres operate well, the system has been prone to abuse and mismanagement, to the point that facilities have even been investigated for Mafia infiltration.²¹

3.4 Roundtables for co-designing public policies: “I Tavoli”

In order to co-produce common and shared inclusion policies at the local level, roundtable consultations with public bodies and third sector representatives were set up during the city council’s first term starting in 2011.

The Tavoli were called upon by the administration, more or less monthly, or requested by local actors to deal with emergencies when necessary. The Tavoli were organised around thematic areas. The most active ones have been migrants table dealing migrant communities and third sector representatives; poverty table: about homelessness, therefore also touching the issue of migration; rom table: working with Roma communities. The experience of tavoli aimed at overcoming fragmenting support to migrant populations by coordinating public sector and civil society actions.

²⁰ Interviews conducted with NGO representatives, activists in the city of Naples, conducted between October and December 2020. For privacy purposes, their names are not reported.

²¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/8/28/italy-migrants-protest-expulsion-from-refugee-centres-in-naples>

An administration that is listening

Following a series of exchanges with local actors, including the roundtables, the administration registry office, in charge of demographics, was able to improve the service it provided and some inefficiencies were readjusted. “It is possible to say that civil society has stimulated and provided a bottom-up capacity building process that the administration, on the other side, has welcomed”.

The Municipal Council of Immigrants

However, “there are problems in transforming and adopting innovative practices, probably due to excessive bureaucracy.” One example is the case of the “*consulta migranti*,” a collective made of representatives of migrant communities, that was supposed to join the city council permanently. The *consulta* was seen as an instrument of autonomy and political recognition of the migrant population, radically democratic, born under the support of the public administration.²²

The *consulta* was proposed during the migrant table, and despite being accepted by the administration, was slowed down by several bureaucratic hitches. Later on, “this cooperation has been further elaborated through the Municipal Council of Immigrants, a body of advice and guidance on immigration, and approved, in Municipal Council Resolution n. 494 of 10/30/2019. The *Consulta* is aimed at promoting the participation of immigrant citizens in local institutions. It stimulates participation, discussion and political-institutional, cultural and social exchange; supports proposals that pursue the improvement of immigrant quality of life, promotes their training, education, and integration.

The *consulta* approach is a first attempt to enlarge the public arena of migrant political participation in decision making in Naples. Other cities in Europe have experimented successfully with similar approaches, especially when the role of the immigration council goes beyond mere consultation, entering the field of actual policy design and implementation.

4. Advocacy and network activities

The definition as “city of solidarity” for Naples is not related to a specific declaration at the local, national, or European level, but to civic initiatives and official political commitments in solidarity with the migrant population. The most outstanding political achievement of the city is the public stance of the Naples government against restrictive measures brought forward by national authorities. Because of this clear position challenging the national government, Naples became known Europe-wide as a city of solidarity.

²² Manifesto di autonomia della città di Napoli <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pag-es/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/36432>

Manifesto of Autonomy (2011)

The city endorsed the progressive Manifesto of Autonomy in 2011 and the Charter of rights in 2013, while adopting a rights-based municipalist government in the city. In 2011, the Manifesto of Autonomy recalls Naples as a “city of rights and peace, against the neoliberal prerogatives, in defence of local communities” (with a government capable to interpret) “the needs of local, stationary, and migrant communities requiring an idea of democratization that gives rise to a new relationship between national institutions and social and territorial needs.”

Introducing Local Citizenship

Citizenship-based discrimination for the provision of municipal welfare services were removed,²³ as part of a declaration expressing the city’s favour towards Jus Soli, the granting of citizenship through birth on Italian soil, heavily debated but never approved by the Italian government. Italian municipalities do not have the jurisdictional power to pass legislation of their own to grant Italian citizenship. Naples still granted a sort of symbolic “Neapolitan citizenship” to every second-generation migrant, and stated by the declaration that “the municipal government would treat every individual equally when providing proximity services, judged essential to start any process of integration or human protection.”²⁴

Safe Harbour

In September 2014, the city successfully welcomed almost 900 refugees rescued from a situation of distress in the channel of Sicily by the military vessel *Virginio Fassan*.²⁵

Similarly in October 2016, the *Gregoretto* military vessel reached the city with 460 rescued people.²⁶ In January 2017, Naples was declared “Città Rifugio” (Shelter City), through the signature of a pact between the city government, the Foreign Ministry, and local actors.²⁷

²³ <https://www.comune.napoli.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/20645>

Text of the charter <http://www.napolicittasolidale.it/portal/ncs/pri-mo-piano/2777-una-carta-di-cittadinanza-per-gli-immigrati.html>

²⁴ <https://www.pressenza.com/it/2013/07/napoli-diritti-e-doveri-per-tutte-e-per-tutti/>

²⁵ https://www.ansa.it/campania/notizie/2014/09/10/a-napoli-nave-con-700-immigrati_9699a87b-9b53-4de8-86df-4086a76c6d68.html

²⁶ https://www.ilmattino.it/napoli/cronaca/oltre_quattrocen-to_migranti_sbarcati_napoli_alle_prime_luci_alba-2041698.html

²⁷ <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/migranti-minniti-napoli-ac-coglienza-diffusa-lintegrazione>

²⁸ https://www.agi.it/fact-checking/salvini_sindaci_decreto_sicurezza-4796194/news/2019-01-04/

Challenging Salvini’s migration politics

This progressive stand, almost unique in the Italian political context, was clearly in opposition to the national government, when the city countered Interior Minister Salvini’s security decree. The 2018 Security Decree (later enacted as Law 132/2018) ordered the closing of harbours to sea rescue ships, wiping out the “Humanitarian Protection” status awarded to claimants who did not qualify as Convention refugees but were deemed too at risk for forced removals. As a consequence, several thousand people already living in Italy could be deprived of their residence rights.²⁸ Moreover, the decree downsized the welcoming system SPRAR, denying asylum seekers access to housing and many public services until after they had received a confirmation of their refugee status, a process that can take years.

De Magistris publicly challenged national authorities and together with Mayor Orlando of Palermo, became one of the most vocal elected representatives to be engaged in solidarity towards migrants. He allied with the newly adopted Palermo Charter Process initiated to create alliances between civil society and sea rescue actors. The first mayor to declare their non-compliance with the security decree was the Mayor of Palermo, Leoluca Orlando, soon followed by his Neapolitan counterpart. In a matter of days, a coalition of mayors of prominent Italian cities, such as Florence, Turin, Bologna, Rome, and other cities belonging to the association of Italian municipalities (ANCI), asked for the decree to be reviewed—or declared their intention to not comply.²⁹

Naples further restated its commitment to informal alliances with the city of Barcelona, Palermo, and other municipalities (such as the summer 2018 meeting of the city of Barcelona, Naples at Riace in solidarity with the hunger strike of mayor Lucano). As recognition for its persistent humanitarian efforts, Naples was included in the Network of Solidarity Municipalities (or Rete dei Comuni Solidali Re.Co.Sol) in January 2019.

Naples has recently been added to the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration Project (MC2CM) in its second phase during 2018-2020.³⁰ The MC2CM aims to bring together the experiences of several cities on their governance of migratory phenomena, focusing on the challenges and solutions for providing access to basic services and human rights for migrants.³¹

The current mayor's mandate is firmly committed in solidarity with migrants, and saving lives at sea as shown through the support of the latest initiative called ResQ onlus. "We have welcomed ResQ in our city," said Mayor Luigi de Magistris in October 2020: "and as the Administration, we intend to give full support to ResQ's commitment to launch a ship with the aim of rescuing shipwrecked migrants in the Central Mediterranean. We consider the involvement of the population, the many expressions of associations and civil society to be important and essential. As a seaside city that has made hospitality its flag, we will identify ways to promote the project."³²

²⁹ <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/ecco-comuni-che-sospendono-decreto-sicurezza-contro-salvini-AEgm8q8G>

³⁰ <https://www.icmpd.org/our-work/migration-dialogues/mtm-dialogue/city-to-city-mc2cm/>

³¹ However, it is not clear whether the participation in such exchange programmes had a real impact on the ground.

³² https://napoli.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/10/13/news/migranti_de_magistris_sostegno_a_progetto_nave_soccorso-270433922/

The **Moving Cities** project provides an in-depth research of 28 progressive, solidarity-based cities and their strategies in Europe, exploring their most inspiring and successful local approaches to their migration policies.

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